Author: Bill Buliziuk
250-387-0335 William.Buliziuk@gov.bc.ca

The Western Showdown: A comparison of BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba's labour market trends

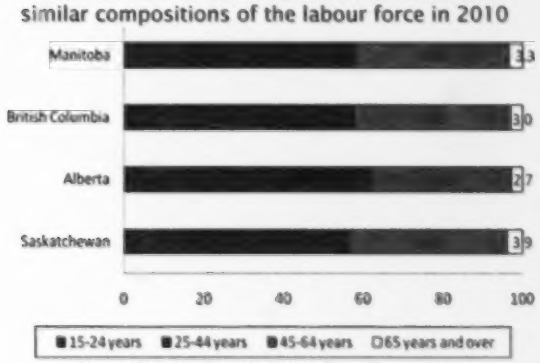
The labour force

British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba (the western provinces) have some notable differences in the overall labour market characteristics, wage rates, demographics and educational attainment.

Age composition

BC, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba's labour forces[1] are predominately made up of people 25 to 44 years of age, hitting a high of 45.3 percent in Alberta and a low of 39.7 percent in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan and Manitoba have slightly higher proportions, relative to BC and Alberta, of those between 15 to 24 years old and those over 65 years old.

BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba had similar compositions of the labour force in 2010

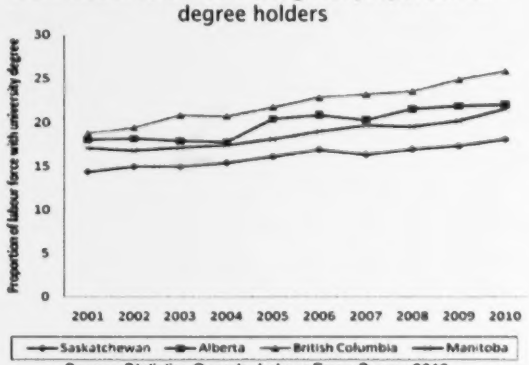


Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2010

Educational attainment

Of the four western provinces, BC's labour force (15 years and older) has had a higher proportion of participants holding a university degree[2] since the beginning of the decade. In 2001, the proportion of BC's labour force participants with a university degree was 18.8 percent—slightly higher than Alberta (18.0 percent) and Manitoba (17.1 percent), and markedly higher than Saskatchewan (14.3 percent). The proportion of participants in BC's labour market with a university credential grew at a quicker rate than Alberta and Saskatchewan throughout the decade. In 2010, over a quarter of BC's labour force had a university credential. BC's rate was 3.8 percentage points more than Alberta's (22.1 percent), 4.3 percentage points more than Manitoba's (21.6 percent) and 7.8 percentage points greater than Saskatchewan's (18.1 percent).

BC's labour force has the highest proportion of degree holders



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2010

At the other end of the education spectrum, at 21.8 percent, BC had the lowest proportion of participants in the labour force whose highest level of education was a high school diploma. Saskatchewan had the highest proportion (25.1 percent), followed

[1] The labour force includes those employed and those people looking for work.

[2] Includes baccalaureate and graduate degrees.

by Manitoba (23.6 percent) and Alberta (22.5 percent).

Aboriginal peoples

In 2010, Manitoba had the highest proportion of Aboriginal peoples (age 15 and over) in the population and labour force—9.8 percent and 9.3 percent respectively. BC had the lowest proportion of Aboriginal peoples in the population and labour force at 3.0 percent and 2.9 percent.

Immigrants

BC had the highest proportion of immigrants[3] (ages 15 an over) in 2010 in both its population and labour force (28.5 percent and 25.5 percent respectively). Alberta had a population and labour force made up of 19.9 percent and 18.8 percent immigrants followed by Manitoba at 16.7 percent and 16.6 percent. Saskatchewan had the lowest proportions of immigrants with 7.3 percent of the population and 6.8 percent of the population made up of immigrants.

As noted above, BC has the higher proportion of labour force participants holding a university degree of the western provinces. BC's immigrant population has a considerable impact on the high education attainment rates seen in the province. BC immigrants tend to be highly educated, for example in 2010, over forty percent of immigrants in BC's labour force (between the ages of 25 to 54) had a university degree or higher. This is almost double the rate of the Canadian born population in BC (24.6 percent).

[3] Includes very recent immigrants (5 years or less), recent immigrants (5-10 years) and established immigrants (10 plus years).

Industry

Of the western provinces, Saskatchewan has the highest proportion of the people employed in the goods-producing sector[4] (27.4 percent), followed closely by Alberta (26.8 percent), Manitoba (23.1 percent)-and BC with 19.6 percent; indicating that BC has the highest proportion of employees in the services-producing sector. Within each province the top five industries account for over half of the total employment. Trade (including wholesale and retail) are leading employment in all four provinces—hitting a high of 16.4 percent in BC and a low 15.0 percent in Manitoba.

Top five industries by employment for the western provinces

Industry	BC	Alta	Sask	Man
Agriculture	-	-	8.0	-
Forestry[5]	-	7.1	-	-
Construction	8.4	10.2	7.6	-
Manufacturing	-	-	-	10.2
Trade	16.4	15.2	15.3	15.0
Professional[6]	7.7	7.5	-	-
Educational	7.4	10.9	7.5	8.4
Healthcare[7]	11.7	-	12.9	14.7
Accommodation[8]	-	-	-	6.5
Total	**51.6**	**50.9**	**51.6**	**54.8**

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2010

[4] From Industry Canada: Goods-producing industries are primarily associated with the production of goods (e.g., growing of crops, generation of electricity, the manufacturing of computers), however, these sectors may also produce some services (e.g., pest control services, plumbing services, land subdivision, house-painting, support services for mining operations).

[5] Includes fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas

[6] Includes scientific and technical services

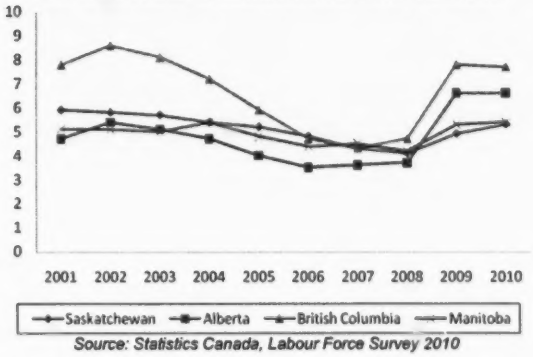
[7] Includes social assistance services

[8] Includes food services

Unemployment rate

In terms of unemployment rates[9], BC has consistently had the highest unemployment rates of the western provinces for those 15 to 64 years of age. In 2001, BC's unemployment rate of 7.8 percent was 3.1 percentage points higher than Alberta's rate of 4.7 percent. Manitoba and Saskatchewan's unemployment rates were slightly higher than Alberta but still well below BC's rate (5.1 percent and 5.9 percent respectively). In 2010, BC still had the highest unemployment rate of the westerns provinces at 7.7 percent, followed by Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan at 6.6 percent, 5.4 percent and 5.3 percent respectively.

BC has consistently had higher unemployment rates than Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2010

Difference in unemployment by sex

For the past twenty years, all of the western provinces had reported differences between the unemployment rates of their men and women (ages 15 to 64), with women, for the most part, having the lower unemployment rates. In 2010, men in BC had an unemployment rate of 8.7 percent, 2.0 percentage points higher than the women's rate of 6.7 percent. During the past two decades, there have only been three years in BC when the unemployment rate reported for women was actually higher than the unemployment rate reported for men—2005, 2006 and 2007. A similar trend was seen in Alberta. In the last twenty years women in Manitoba and Saskatchewan have always reported lower unemployment rates compared to their male counterparts. The largest unemployment rate gap between men and women was reported in BC in 2009 when the rate for men was 2.2 percentage points higher than the rate for women (8.8 percent vs. 6.6 percent).

Labour force participation and employment rates

BC has consistently had the lowest labour force participation rates (for those 15 to 64 years of age) compared to Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan. In 2001, BC's participation rate of 74.7 percent was well below the rates posted in the other western provinces. Alberta reported the highest rate of 81.0 percent (6.3 percentage points higher than BC's rate.) Manitoba (79.9 percent), Saskatchewan (77.8 percent) also reported higher rates compared to BC. In 2010, BC still struggled with a lower labour force participation rates—Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan all had participation rates in the eighties (80.9 percent, 81.1 percent and 81.6 percent, respectively) while BC reported a rate of 76.6 percent.

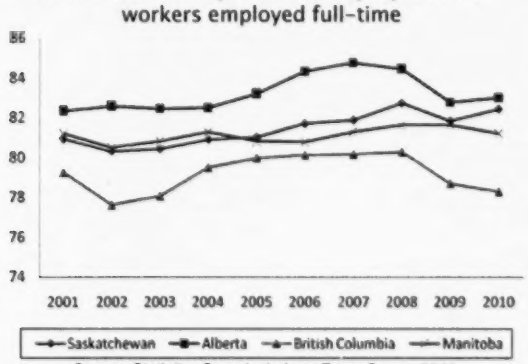
In 2010, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan had similar employment rates at 75.7 percent, 76.5 percent and 77.3 percent respectively. BC had a significantly lower employment rate at 70.7 percent.

[9] Number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

BC has the lowest proportion of employees working full-time

The western provinces have different proportions of workers employed full-time. Alberta has consistently had the highest proportion of full-time workers. BC had its highest proportion of workers employed full-time in 2008 at a level of 80.3 percent and its lowest at 77.6 percent in 2002. Alberta had its highest proportion of full-time workers in the labour force in 2007 (84.8 percent) and saw its lowest level in 2001. Saskatchewan's full-time workers had their largest share of the labour force in 2010 at 82.7 percent and similar to BC they had their lowest share at 80.3 percent in 2002. Finally, Manitoba had its highest proportion of full-time employed workers in 2008 and 2009 at 81.6 percent and it had its lowest in 2002 at 80.5 percent.

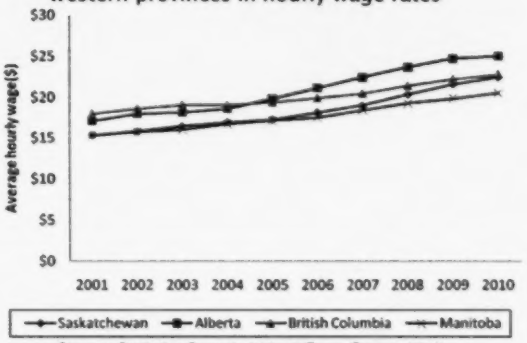
BC has consistently had a lower proportion of workers employed full-time



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2010

Wages in BC have slipped from first to last place. At the start of the decade (2001), BC workers earned the most per hour at $18.00. As of 2010, workers employed in Alberta earned a higher average hourly wage than those workers residing in BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba—$25.10 an hour for Alberta, followed by BC at $22.80, Saskatchewan workers earn $22.40 an hour and workers in Manitoba earned the least at $20.50 an hour (on average).

Workers in Alberta are currently leading the western provinces in hourly wage rates



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2010

Self-employment has grown in BC

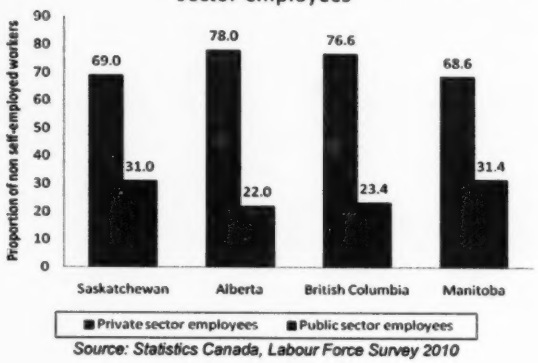
In 2010 BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba's labour markets were comprised of 19.2 percent, 17.0 percent, 19.3 percent and 14.6 percent of self-employed workers respectively. The provinces had significantly different changes in the proportion of self-employed workers since 2001. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba had higher proportions of workers who were self-employed in 2001, at 17.2 percent, 21.7 percent and 14.8 percent respectively. BC is the only province to have a higher proportion of self-employed workers in 2010 than in 2001—19.2 percent versus 18.3 percent, an increase of 0.9 percentage points.

Public and private sector employment

Of those who are not identified as self-employed there are differences across the provinces as to what proportions are private-sector employees or public-sector employees. In 2010 the largest share of private-sector employees were employed in Alberta at 78.0 percent—1.4 percentage points more than BC (76.6 percent), 9.0 per-

centage points greater than Saskatchewan (69.0 percent) and 9.4 percent more than Manitoba.

Saskatchewan has the largest proportion of public sector employees



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2010